

# Cistercian Architectural Heritage as Cultural Landmarks

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This approach will be based on the Cistercian heritage in Portugal through a systematic analysis of the Cistercian existences, its appropriation and insertion in the territory. So that this contextualization to be possible, it's necessary to proceed to the identification of the territorial keywords, which provided the existence of these architectures in Portugal, as well as its integration, its transformation and its permanence in the territory. The geographical, topographical and historic approaches will be providing a typology scheme for the chosen sites. The relationship between Cistercian architecture and actuality is deeply linked to the subject of how to rehabilitate this heritage. Which are the actions and the strategies to be used? How the monastic heritage does interact with the contemporary urban or rural territory? How an ideal becomes an architectural reality? How the Cistercian architectural heritage becomes a cultural landmark?

The Cistercian Order was introduced in Portugal, in the twelfth century, in a moment in which the Order was still on its first expansion phase and Portugal was beginning to develop while a nation. Tradition points the first foundation as S. João de Tarouca, in 1143, the same year in which Afonso VII king of Lion and Castile recognized to Afonso Henriques the title of King of the "portucalensis terra". Nevertheless it would be only in 1179 that the Pope Alexander III solemnly recognized D. Afonso Henriques as king and his state as a kingdom.

The foundations of the Cistercian Order in Portugal were, since the beginning, associated to objectives of occupation and administration of the territory, above all during the formation of the nation. A cohesion and inter-connection are associated to these objectives, not only at a territorial level, but also as a civilization and cultural levels. On the portuguese context the cistercian monastery becomes also a mean of assertion and defense of the territory. This fact allows understanding the vast scale of the territory's occupation, the extension of its domains and influence areas (Figure 1).

The new monasteries that appeared in Portugal were set to the image of the Monastery of Clairvaux, defining a type of settlement in a place. It was just in 1567 that the Portuguese Cistercians were unbound from the obedience of Clairvaux with the creation of the Autonomous Congregation of Alcobaça.

In Portugal, actually is possible to find about 35 samples of this architecture as cultural landmarks. Complete, partial or impressive ruins of monasteries belonging to the Cistercian Order, either by foundation or by affiliation, which in time were inhabited by monks and nuns.

The largest rate of incorporations in the Cistercian Order, accomplished in Portugal, was established above all during the twelfth century and thirteenth century corresponding at 63% of the monasteries total (that is about 29% in the twelfth century and about 34% in the thirteenth century). The largest adhesion to the Cistercian Order was verified during the reign of D. Afonso Henriques (1128-1185).



Figure 1. King D. Afonso Henriques lays the first stone of the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal. Ceramic tiles of the 18<sup>th</sup> century exist at the Monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaça (photo: AMTM)

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there was a large decrease of the adhesions to the order, just corresponding respectively at 5% and 3% of the total. However in the sixteenth century, with the creation of the Autonomous Congregation of Alcobaça, at October 26th 1567, the situation was inverted increasing the rate to 18% which allowed a new dynamism to the Cistercian institution.

Not very later than this begins the period of the great reconstructions and restorations, and it is at this period (characterized by the Baroque taste) that the new facades of the Churches of Alcobaça and of Bouro are drawn.

The eighteenth century was the century of the "Talha" (carved wood covered with a thin gold leaf) as well of the Baroque adornments which constitute an entire integrated heritage to preserve. In the eighteenth century, the Liberal wars and the French invasions just come to deepen the decadence situation in which the Order was inserted.

In the nineteenth century, in Portugal, the monastic orders are extinguished by decree, in 1834, and the Cistercian Order extinguishes among all the others. With the twentieth century the campaigns of restoration, reconstruction, renewal, and rehabilitation begin under the responsibility of the Directorate General for National Buildings and Monuments (DGEMN) as well as the Portuguese Institute of Architectural Heritage (IPPAR) and a few individual proprietaries, action which was extended to this century. The twenty-first century must be able to stand out what this legacy has of best, preserving its memory as a national treasure that deserves to be loved, cherished and preserved.

The Cistercian legacy in Portugal is composed by feminine monasteries and masculine monasteries, farms and schools but also by the movable heritage that integrated these architectures. Among the elements composing the Cistercian architectures legacy, on this country, some examples stand out for their exceptionality: Monastery of S. João de Tarouca, Monastery of Santa Maria de Salzedas, Monastery of Santa Maria das Júnias, Monastery of Santa Maria do



Figure 2. Monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaça – transept (photo: AMTM)

Bouro, Monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaça (with which the gothic style has begun, in Portugal, and last founded in the life of Saint Bernard). As the historian Paulo Pereira refers: “(...) when the Gothic style arrives in Portugal it arrives by cistercian way. Deprived and cold, clear and plane, luminous and ‘white’. It remains to know, in fact, if the Portuguese architecture, of the following centuries doesn't owe much or almost everything to this cistercian aesthetic that obstinately endured (...).” (Figure 2.) The architectures of the Cistercian Order in Portugal allowed and accompanied the evolution of the architectonic solutions of the different periods being possible to find in each of them a stylistic predominance. That is, each monastery possesses an architectural style that prevails and it stands out when an attentive analysis of its structure or architectonic morphology is done.

In Portugal, the choice of the places where the Cistercians implanted their monasteries had, above all during the initial period, the same concern that was underlying, to many other Cistercian implantations. That is to say, the places should correspond not only to the interpretation and observance of St. Benedict's Rule as well as to the search for “the desert's solitude” and its attributes which mostly determined the choice of the places even influencing the structural and morphologic conception of the monastery. The Cistercians, in Portugal, searched places away from the great urban centers, preferentially on fertile valleys and near of a water's course to implant their monasteries in conformity with the Cistercian ideal.

The distribution of the Portuguese Cistercian monasteries, at geographical level, is quite asymmetric. In fact there is a large concentration of elements on the north and centre of Portugal unlike the territory to south of the river Tagus, where the implantations are very limited. This fact is explained by historical reasons regarding to the time and geographical area in question. The Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, by the Christians, progressed from the North to the South. The North zone was only for a few years in the hands of the Arabs while the South was submitted to them since the eighth century to the thirteenth century.

It is possible to find four territory types, already pointed by Father Maur Cocheril, Cistercian monk and researcher, where the Cistercians implanted their monasteries: valley, mountain, coast and plain.



Figure 3. Monastery of S. João de Tarouca on the “Beiras” region of Portugal (photo: AMTM)

In this way the monasteries or its vestiges which nowadays can be still visited are found above all on valleys and on mountain territory corresponding to about 60% of the implantations. However it is also possible to find implantations close to the coast (about 32%) as well as a few plain situations (about 8%) which come to contradict in a certain way the established norm.

The Monastery of S. João de Tarouca (1143) is set on mountain territory, in the region of the “Beiras” cradle from which many of the other Cistercian monasteries will irradiate as well. (Figure 3.) From this monastery it subsists, today, the Church (which continues with liturgical activities and which could be visited, out of the liturgical schedule) and of which is evidenced the sacristy, the monumental dormitories from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are also of highlighting besides their unfortunate state of ruin and finally the impressive vestiges of the extremely elaborated hydraulic system. Actually archaeological excavations are being done and began to reveal the original cloister from the twelfth century, as well as the remains of the Chapter-house, the kitchen and the latrines.

On the other hand, to north, very close to the border with Spain we found, also on mountain territory the Monastery of Santa Maria de Fiães (twelfth century) from which only remains the church. A little further to the East, on Peneda Gerês National Park, which is a protected space, we find the Monastery of Santa Maria das Júnias (thirteenth century). It is worthwhile to stop ourselves for a few moments on this monastery. In spite of the very ruined condition and without any monastic or liturgical activity it continues to be visited (not only by the nature’s admirers but also by the admirers of the architectural heritage which sometimes can be found in the most unexpected places as on this case). Still today it is difficult the access to this small monastery being just done on foot by a sharp and rather difficult road. This example is deeply immersed on the cistercian ideal because of its isolation, communion with nature, away from everything and everyone, in a mountain situation but at the same time in a valley situation in the bottom of which runs a little river with crystal clear water. This Monastery returns to the life every year on August 15th, day of Our Lady’s Assumption, when the population of the nearest



Figure 4. Monastery of Santa Maria das Júnias on Peneda Gerês National Park, Portugal (photo: AMTM)

villages, mostly of the village of Pitões das Júnias joins in procession beginning from this village and ending in the monastery where there is a liturgical celebration. However the monastery's church has been, for a very few times, used for a rather different kind of celebration. There were a few isolated cases in which the natives of the nearby village of Pitões das Júnias, emigrated to other countries, returned to Portugal and to their native village to be united in matrimony on the monastery's church.(Figure 4.)

The implementation and incorporation of the monasteries of the Cistercian Order, in Portugal, had its initial centre in the Beiras' region. So the cistercian monasteries were settled, on a first phase, between the river Douro and the river Tagus, for the reasons and objectives already referred to, radiating from this centre to the rest of the Country. The introduction of the Cistercian Order, right in the heart of the Beiras, was begun with S. João de Tarouca, but one must not forget the importance of other two monasteries, also inserted on this area and which raised and much contributed to the cistercian action on the country (they provided the development of the vineyard culture and the fomentation of the wine trade). These two monasteries are Santa Maria de Salzedas and S. Pedro das Águias. Both are examples of transfer of settlements, practice which happened sometimes with the cistercian monasteries. This happened to the monastery of Santa Maria de Salzedas that is today a national monument. To the Salzedas' monastery corresponded a first implantation a little further to the northwest. In fact, some years ago were found, by accident, significant archaeological vestiges in private property. It were the vestiges of the Old Abbey of Salzedas, today classified as public interest property, located on private land which belongs to a private farm Quinta da Abadia Velha (which means literally Old Abbey's Farm). In the same way the Monastery of S. Pedro das Águias (the new) that is today associated to a Port wine producer (called Quinta do Convento meaning once again Convent's farm) and which was preceded by the monastery of S. Pedro das Águias (the old) from which still subsists today the Church. This last monastery, the old one, was born of an old hermitage but the architectonic construction was never concluded. However, it was recuperated and reconstructed by the Directorate General for National Buildings and Monuments (DGEMN) in the beginning of the twentieth century, according to the theories applied on that time. It is curious if we thought for a moment that the vineyards cultivated by the cistercian monks still subsist today and they are part of the World heritage that is today the "Upper Douro wine country". *"The development of the wine cultivation and exploration in the European medieval occident is due to the liturgical needs of the church (...)"*. as José Ignacio de la Torre Rodríguez refers. The cistercians tried to cultivate its vineyards near the rivers on soils where it would be difficult to do another type of cultivation. In fact, many of those lands and farms are still today linked to the wine production and even constituting the nucleus of some wine production farms on the Douro demarcated region as the Granjão's Farm or the Monsul's Farm. In the same way, the vineyards that were on Salzedas Monastery properties also prevail today as revenue source allowing to produce the sparkling wines from the Wine-cellar Murganheira which are inserted neither more nor less



Figure 5. Monastery of Santa Maria de Aguiar on Figueira Castelo Rodrigo, Portugal (photo: AMTM)

than on The Old Abbey of Salzedas Farm.

The viticulture of cistercien origin which still subsists today can also be found in Santa Maria de Aguiar on Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo. (Figure 5.) This twelfth century masculine monastery has currently a curious administration solution being in a way an example of the general state of the monasteries in Portugal. In it we found an hotel exploration ran by the family which owns the monastery coexisting the private habitation and the habitation's tourism called "Hospedaria do Convento" (meaning Convent's guesthouse), in the building that corresponded to the guesthouse of the monastery. The habitation's tourism is a type of tourist exploration of a building, generally far away from the urban centers, in which a family welcomes in their own residence visitors and tourists, under license of the Directorate General of Tourism, doing revenue source of that. The Church of Santa Maria de Aguiar is possible to be visited. The lands in which the monastery is inserted are still today connected to the wine production. Unfortunately the remaining part of the monastery is a ruin, which can also be visited, although private property.

The thirteenth century was essentially the century of the feminine implantations, in which had a preponderant role the three granddaughters of the King D. Afonso Henriques (they were D. Sancho the 1st daughters) Teresa, Mafalda and Sancha. From this century are monasteries such as the Lorvão (old monastery of benedictine monks) founded by D. Teresa (between 1200 and 1206) and located near to Coimbra, Celas' Monastery (1214), located in Coimbra, founded by D. Sancha and Arouca's Monastery (1223), located the north of the Country, affiliated by D. Mafalda. Quickly the Cistercian Order became the Order of election of the high nobility and of the real blooded women. Also from this time are the foundation of the feminine Monastery of Almoester (1287) and the affiliation of the Monastery of S. Bento de Cástris (1275), also a feminine one. S. Bento de Cástris, is located on the surroundings of Évora's city, which never was absorbed by the expansion of the city and, it is an example of a monastery of the plain, located on the south of the river Tagus, on the southern part of Portugal, on the Alentejo region. Santa Maria de Almoester is also inserted on a situation of plain, on Ribatejo, above the river Tagus and relatively near to Lisbon.

But, there is the existence of a second pole of implementation of the Cistercian Order on Portugal, besides the Beiras region, it is the Alcobaça region. From the second half of the twelfth century to the beginning of the fourteenth century the cistercians raised a vast domain which was called "Coutos de Alcobaça". To the Monastery of Alcobaça was due the proliferation of farms which had a preponderant role in the cultivation and settlement of the vast territories donated to the Abbey and desolated by the wars of the Christian reconquest (and in the beginning still under the menace of new Arab invasions). Later, these farms became florescent villages. As the years went by the Abbey enriches and becomes a powerful feud which opulence contrasted with the primitive simplicity and austerity. As curiosity the grandeur and the opulence of Alcobaça's Monastery were such that simply its kitchen in the eighteenth century style was remembered by William of Beckford's writings as "*the most remarkable Temple off gluttony in all Europe*"

Of the sixteenth century are the Monastery of Santa Maria de Cós inserted on the vast area of Alcobaça and also the Espírito Santo's School (1541) in Coimbra. This School is located in Rua da Sofia (that is Sofia's Street or street of wisdom) one of the most structuring streets of Coimbra. In this street existed a vast number of schools of religious Orders built after the fixation of the University, in 1537, in the city of Coimbra. Actually the School of S. Bernardo de Coimbra, as it is also known, is used for habitation purposes and the ground-floor has a commercial use. The area inside its encircling walls was subject of landscape rehabilitation.

The nineteenth century was characterized by a growing anticlericalism which culminated with the extinction of the religious Orders, by decree of May 28th, 1834, signed then by the Minister of the Justice of the liberal government Joaquim António de Aguiar. This decree determined the total and immediate extinction of the monasteries, convents, schools, hospices and all the religious houses and regular orders, independently of its denomination, institute or Rule. To the nuns, unlike the monks, it was allowed to stay in their monasteries until the death of the last religious of each monastery. The last cistercian nun was Mother Carolina Augusta de Castro e Silva, she died in 1909 with 93 years of age and she was Our lady's of Nazaré do Mocambo nun (known today as Bernardas's Convent). With her the Cistercian Order disappeared in Portugal, for about eighty years until in 1989 the Cistercian Monastery of Our Lady of Maranathá was founded, in the Algarve. However the insufficient number of nuns caused the dissolution of the monastery and the consequent disappearance of it a few years later.

Actually most of the subsisting monasteries are inserted so much on rural zones as on urban zones, once the cities quickly grew and the monasteries formerly distant were integrated into the urban fabric. This way we can find about 40% of monasteries on rural zones and an identical rate on urban zones. However about 14% of these monasteries prevail on natural or protected spaces, and the remaining rate is to be found in mixed zones, that is, of transition between the rural and the urban zones.

Though the Cistercians were a Order that requested the solitude and the isolation, being implanted away from the urban context the Cistercian monastery can be understood as a territorial organism which is inserted in a territory in the way that it adapts the territory, modeling and altering it according to its needs but also as an urban organism in the way in that can be understood as having urban characteristics or even as making integral part of contemporary urban reality contributing to its development. The monastery has begun with a micro-scale situation in which it was compared to a self-sufficient micro-city, and reaches a macro-scale situation in which becomes an urban organism that has to adapt to a new situation. Therefore the transformation and development of the territory allowed that isolated implantations were absorbed gradually by the expansion of the urban fabric and interacted with it, as it is the case of Sta Maria de Alcobaça and of the city where it is inserted or even Our Lady of Nazaré do Mocambo in Lisbon.

These architectures acquired a statute of marks of an emergent nation and of the development of a culture, above all while interlinked and coherent system, which it is ruled by the same group of values and ideals. In fact, this system should be faced not only as the group of these architectures, but also its rehabilitations, reutilizations and alteration of meanings.

In 1998 there was a congress in Alcobaça from which proceeded a group of conclusions under the form of a letter - the letter of Alcobaça - which determinations are being implement whenever it's possible. I would like to point out three important points of this letter: 3. *Recognition of the unique nature of the Cistercian Order's heritage, specifically in the way this*

*occupies, governs, creates or recreates space as well as using and developing it in material and symbolic terms / 4. Recognition of the specific nature of the Cistercian Order's legacy, as shown in the remains, records, monuments and residual and active memories that are still expressed today in the individual features of the experiences of life in lands that once belonged to the Cistercians (...) /6. Recognition of the Cistercian Order's heritage as a catalyst for restructuring the respective urban surroundings and their respective landscape and environmental elements*

Regarding to the classification of the Cistercian architectural heritage the largest number is classified to which corresponds a 83% rate that results of the sum of the 48% rate of National Monuments plus the 35% rate of Properties of Public Interest. The remaining values correspond at 3% which are in study, that is, waiting for classification and finally a 14% which are not classified.

Regarding the rehabilitation of this legacy there's already some work done, and being done not only by the Portuguese Institute of Architectural Heritage (IPPAR) but also by the Directorate General for National Buildings and Monuments (DGEMN) and more recently by the Institute for the Management of the Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (IGESPAR) which resulted of the fusion of both previous institutions. Relatively to the work of DGEMN it should be considered the conservation campaigns, as well as recuperations and rehabilitations accomplished in the last seven decades. Relatively to the work IPPAR it should be pointed out the case of the monasteries of Arouca, Santa Maria de Salzedas, S. João de Tarouca, Santa Maria de Aguiar, Lorvão and Alcobaça.

Portugal has been developing an integrated program of recuperation and rehabilitation of the monastic heritage, which embraces part of the Cistercian legacy. This integrated plan seeks the recuperation, rehabilitation and valorization of the cistercian heritage as well as the increment of the cultural interest for the territory. The current course of action of IGESPAR is related to the accomplishment of the interventions of recuperation and valorization of the monuments, as well as the spaces requalification; the resolution of problems related with the property quittance; definition of use programs and re-use of the recuperated spaces; the integral recuperation of the Churches belonging to the monasteries.

The Municipalities also invested on the rehabilitation of the cistercian architectures as it is the case of the City hall of Lisbon with the Monastery of Our Lady of Nazaré do Mocambo. Known as well as Bernardas' Convent which is located in the Madragoa Neighborhood. It was founded in 1653 above pré-existences, was totally destroyed during the great Lisbon earthquake in 1755 and reconstructed later on by Giacomo Azzolini. The recent rehabilitation project was elaborated by the architectural office ARCHI III. Today in this former monastic space are coexisting the Puppet's Museum, 34 habitations, shops and a restaurant.

The cistercian legacy was also taken in consideration by the City hall of Coimbra that was interested in the revitalization and landscape reconversion of the encircling walls of S. Bernardo's School integrated in the city's urban fabric. This reconversion was a project of the architect João Mendes Ribeiro, author of the Experimental Theater of Coimbra that is also located inside of the encircling walls of S. Bernardo as well as of the recent Center of Visual Arts of Coimbra also in connection to the interior of the encircling walls.

The contemporary rehabilitations are sometimes executed by a few private institutions and persons as it is the case of Monastery of São Pedro das Águias or the Monastery of S. Cristóvão de Lafões. Other times the contemporary rehabilitations have the support of the State and they are assigned to private entities as it is the case of the "Pousadas de Portugal", of which makes integral part the Monastery of Santa Maria do Bouro with rehabilitation project of the architects Eduardo Souto de Moura and Humberto Vieira. A Pousada is a State-owned hotel of very high standard usually integrated in an historical building or built from the remains of one. The rehabilitation project was designed in order to adapt the stones of the old monastery which were available to build a new building. This means a new structure in which various assertions and functions intervene as Souto de Moura say's: "I'm not restoring a monastery; I'm building a Pousada with the stones from a monastery".

There is a certain parallelism among some of the former uses and contemporary uses of the cistercian monasteries. The morphology of the monastery adapts with relative simplicity to its new use as hotel. As Souto of Moura refers, relatively to Bouro, "The first idea was simple kitchen-kitchen, pharmacy-bar, library-auditorium, refectory-restaurant, cloister-cloister, cells-



rooms". This was the kind of adaptation that some of the monasteries had, in Portugal, it is the case of Santa Maria do Bouro, Santa Maria de Aguiar, S. Pedro das Águas, S. Cristóvão de Lafões. Others were adapted to hospitals as it is the case of Lorvão's Monastery, today psychiatric hospital, as well as Nossa Senhora do Desterro, today one of the public hospitals of Lisbon, and Santa Maria de Celas which is linked to the pediatric Hospital of Coimbra. Others were adapted to schools or are State institutions as the case of Odivelas' Monastery which is a school for the daughters of the military and is in fact assigned to the Ministry of the Defense, S. Bento of Cástris which shelters a public institution of support to the unprotected children, Our Lady of Nazaré de Setúbal which is nowadays the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal (a State university) or the very peculiar case of the Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Conceição de Portalegre, today known as the Monastery of S. Bernardo de Portalegre which is nowadays the Portalegre's Practical School of the Grouping of Instruction of the National Republican Guard. The maintenance and conservation of this monastery are executed daily by the soldiers. In this example there are certain parallelisms related to its initial use, that is, the church continues to be a church, the dormitory gave place to the soldiers' quarters and the Chapter-house is the room assigned to the officials' meetings.

As well as the Monastery of Bernardas do Mocambo in Lisbon and of Espírito Santo's School in Coimbra, the Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Conceição of Tavira will also have residential use. The Tavira's Monastery, after the extinction of the Orders, was used as a factory and it will be now transformed in a residential condominium by the architect Eduardo Souto de Moura. However, this wasn't the only monastery which had industrial use. Another Monastery, the Monastery of Santa Maria of Seiça, had a factory installed in its interior. It was a rice peeling factory and it had such importance, as industry, that had a railroad passing next to the monastery with the privilege of having a private specific wayside-station for its own purpose. Santa Maria of Seiça is today testimony of the cistercian legacy but it is also an important example of industrial archaeology, today it still can be seen in its interior the rice peeling machinery.

Recently the Monastery of Alcobaça was object of rehabilitation of its southern wing, transformed into a cultural space where temporary exhibitions take place. It's the "Ala São Bernardo" that means St Bernard's wing which project of rehabilitation has a minimalist feature and is of the responsibility of the architects Gonçalo Byrne and João Pedro Falcão de Campos. So, the ground-floor was consolidated allowing the creation, on this floor, of versatile spaces and a parochial space on the first floor.

To Finish I would like to refer this Monastery and the city of Alcobaça, where it's integrated and with which interacts, once again. As time went by, the monastery, generating pole of city, was faced in different manners and has had several uses. The area corresponding to the encircling walls of the monastery of Alcobaça (initially agricultural territory) and to the monastery itself, was absorbed by the city, after the extinction of the monastic Orders, in 1834, the constructions approached and the city reclaimed for itself this space, once of God and of self-isolation.

The monastery is actually inserted in the historical center of Alcobaça which in times corresponded to the city's center and of which stands out the Rossio's importance in the XIX century. In the Portuguese agglomerations predominated an urban structure where, since the Middle Ages, were distributed open spaces and squares with differentiated and well defined uses. However for the great events like fairs or commemorations there was the need to create a completely different kind of public space which would be sufficiently large to take on board any of the events: it was called the Rossio. The Rossio became one of the most characteristic traces of the Portuguese urban structure.

This kind of public space evolved into a multifunctional space but also into a social space which played an important part in the life of the city. This was the area in front of the monastery between the encircling walls, and was a place of trade but also of public walk, it was "The" public space, a space of the city and for the city. However there began to appear an estrangement of the city in relation to its historical center, when the northwest area was beginning to be conquered. It is from this moment on, that the monastery is assumed fundamentally as a historical and cultural landmark.

The Cistercian monastery, that St<sup>a</sup> Maria de Alcobaça is an example, born of an ideal of monastic life, being assumed as an ideal city by a plan of unity and simplicity, man's habitation but also of God, creates a city, non planned, being integral part of the urban fabric and assuming the characteristics of another reality very different from that for which it was planned.



Figure 6. Monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaça, Portugal (photo: AMTM)

However it will never stop causing admiration and its ideal still lives, in actuality, for the austerity of the whiteness of its stones, for the grandeur of its configuration and for the functionality of its spaces which still subsist today, having been even adapted to the actual times, carrying out other functions but not stopping affirming its almost minimal origins. (Figure 6.) It is worthwhile to remember a thought of Le Corbusier on another cistercian monastery, Le Thoronet: “...witness to the truth. Stone is man's friend; its necessary sharp edge enforces clarity of outline and roughness of surface (...). Light and shade are the loudspeakers of this architecture of truth, tranquility and strength. Nothing further could add to it”.

Therefore, an ideal of monastic space based on a plan can be translated into a material reality that converges for an appropriation of the ideal space that embodies that changes and originates, sometimes, cities in the strict sense of the term, non planned cities. That is, from the planned to the spontaneous, from the regular to the irregular, from the monastic ideal to the reality, from the Cistercian architectural heritage to the historical and cultural landmarks.

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